MIRROR PICK-UPS

Mike Hennessey, Mitch Howard, Peter Jones, Val Mabbs, Rob Mackie, Charles Webster.

Erratic but energetic

JAMES BROWN
Get On The Good Foot. (Polydor Super Double 2650 018). The lengthy title track seems to go on for ever, but even so the build-up is compelling — a chattering background to James and one of his own productions in which repetition is the main source of inspiration. This double-album set is really for addicts . . . much of it is over-contrived, sometimes erratically balanced, and some of the pieces, self-penned mostly, barely extend the imagination. But James Brown is always energetic. Always in there pitching. P. J.

KRIS KRISTOFFERSON
JESUS Was A Capricorn (Monument MNT65391): Help Me Make It Through The Night helped to give Kris the wider recognition he has deserved for a long time. Perhaps more people will give him credit for being a fine performer as well as an outstanding song writer. Good American albums always tend to have a better feel than British productions and this album is a fine example of the down home U.S. country feel. The inclusion of wife Rita Coolidge on a number of tracks leads to interesting vocal arrangements which are worked around Kris's typically poignant lyrics, especially on Give It Time To Be Tender. On the title track Kris goes stargazing and the number would appear to be a suitable single. There are some good people on the album and their efforts have combined to make K.K.'s fourth musical milestone something to remember. The standout track is Why Me. Take a listen and you'll find out something about life as well as the meaning of the lyrics.
SAM NEELY
(Capitol E-ST 11097): How many more singer songwriters are we going to be subjected to? Not that they are all bad artists — far from it — but when there are so many people doing the same sort of thing the good ones get lost in the rush. The public say, Oh no not another one and turn off without even listening and I think this could be the fate of Sam Neely. He sings well and is a good writer but he has nothing that takes him above the run of the mill mass produced "I wanna be a country boy" types. Nothing to shout about.
TRAFFIC
Shoot Out At The Fantasy Factory (Island ILPS 9224): A nice big hunk of British funk recorded out in Jamaica. Actually Traffic went of their own accord and came back with a parcel full of musical gems wrapped in a strange package, where all the details are condensed into a space of about 3 inches. Anyway, who cares about the sleeve when the album gets on by itself. Roll Right Stone is very Anglicised while the title track owes a lot to the atmosphere it was recorded in. It's all very relaxing and my favourite of the five tracks is Evening Blue which I for one would love to hear live in THIS country. Come back Traffic-the lights have changed.
THE DUBLINERS
Double Dubliners. — (Columbia SCX 6513). Recorded in Dublin, and with some interesting new songs involved — mostly in a humorous wild Irish sort of frame of mind. Titles include Louse-House In Kilkenny, Champion At Keeping Them Rolling, Drops of Brandy . . . It's a rare Dubliner scene in which some kind of booze isn't mentioned. Traditional airs, mostly.
SHAWN PHILLIPS
Faces — (A & M AMLS 64363). Highlight here is a long, but interesting, track Parisien Plight II, which runs for thirteen minutes and features Stevie Winwood, Glen Campbell, Henry Lowther and other notables in an excitingly built backing team. But in more conventional moods, Shawn is a singer and guitarist who keeps things moving on albums . . . There's a continuity, a flowing exuberance about his performances. It's a tribute to him that he so well captures the mood of his onstage shows. This album is an anthology of his writing-recording work since 1969.
R I C H A R D ROUNDTREE
THE The from Shaft. — (MGM 2315 121). He's been called the Young and Black Sean Connery, or just the black Steve McQueen — but whatever his work in Shaft has made him a super-hero figure. The vocal scene suits him in a lightly swinging style, but even so the real super-heroes are packed into the orchestra used on this movie score . . . names like Ray Brown, Thad Jones, Garnett Brown . . . packed in and really moving when given a breakthrough into the more vibrant compositions. And a real-swinging vocal team behind.
THE MOTHERS
The Grand Wazoo. (K44209). Mr. F. Zappa and a cast of thousands bring us the new Mothers album about the Grand Wazoo. Who or what the Grand Wazoo is cannot be readily defined from the story on the sleeve, or by listening to the record. In fact there's very little vocalising on the LP with the accent being on a jazz based format with some great horn playing and some hot licks from Uncle Frank himself on guitar, especially where he uses wah wah. Each Zappa or Mothers album takes a different tack from the last, and the major difference between Grand Wazoo and their previous set, Just Another Band From LA, is the non-appearance of Mark Volman and Howard Kaylan, whose vocal dexterity accounted for much of the fun aboard the LA album. To many people, Wazoo may be a little difficult to understand, but it's simply a case of where Frank doth lead, we shall follow. Try and keep up with him — there's a lot to be enjoyed.
HANK WILLIAMS
Memorial Album. — (MGM 2683 016). A two-record set — and Record Mirror's Tony Byworth, along with Bryan Chalker, got the tracks together . . . several of them electronically reprocessed for stereo. Williams dominated the country music field. He lived only thirty years, died in 1953, and he was one of the first to be immortalised in the country music hall of fame. Though of a specialist nature, this collection shows his urgently emotional way of singing his own lyrics.
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Reggae Steady Go — (Rhino SRNN 7001). Artists involved here are Bruce Ruffin, The Upsetters, The Aces, Winston Francis, and the exciting Ethiopians, but one of the best tracks is Shackatac by Dave Collins, released first last year. A fair panoramic view of Reggae Development over the past three years.
THE CONGREGATION
The Congregation. — (Columbia SCX 6517). Softly Whispering I Love You was the out-of-the-blue hit which established the team. Lovers Of The World Unite is another strong item on this carefully-paced set — some big orchestral and choral arrangements from Andrew Pryce Jackman, and Brian Keith's lead voice well to the fore. The secret here is simple. Familiar and melodic items; tastefully projected.
BILLY PRESTON
Music Is My Life. — (A and M Amls 63516). Thing About Billy is that he surrounds himself with some top-class musicians. He's strong on instrumental imagination himself, but using George Johnson on guitar, drummer Paul Hubinon, and some fine string and horn arrangements . . . the whole thing comes together well. It's not his best album. Maybe sameness of material has something to do with that, but his We're Gonna Make It and Make The Devil Mad (Turn On To Jesus) are excellent samples of his writing skill, and there's nothing at all wrong with his Blackbird, a revamped and almost ingenious version of the McCartney-Lennon item. The old sheer exuberance comes through well. Sometimes with too strong a flurry of note-shattering.

Mouldy Old Music (Decca SKL 5154). This'll do well. Despite the awesome threats that it was all a one-hit wonder gimmick and destined for an early grave, the gallant Lieutenant's music has gone on to do well in the charts. Nigel Fletcher, Rob Woodward, Steve and "ma" open here with Mouldy Old Dough, then into a fairground sound on Jumping Jack — and, on side two, Desperate Dan makes a predictable appearance. They plunge into a martial beat on Opus 300, and it's organ-grinding stuff on The Monkey Song. There's the odd break for piano, and the odd extra-curricular bit of vocalising — in short, don't expect no musical miracles and you'll enjoy the exercise. It's happy-go-lucky, enthusiastic stuff, and the group has done well to get so many variations of style and sound, specially considering the smallness of the personnel. On the sleeve note, Muriel Young opines: it's a fun dimension to the sound which to me is still different, fresh and loaded with KEFOW! Perhaps that's the word for which we've all been searching . . . "different"! P. J.

Happy-go-lucky stuff from Lt. Pigeon

Not the best of Free but still pretty good

Heartbreaker (Island ILPS 9217). Wishing Well is the one track on this album which really indicates or rather, more than indicates — shows, just what an exciting unit Free can be. And that's despite all their line-up changes over the past months. The rest of the album is less up-tempo but showcases the interesting voice of Paul Rodgers well. Generally it's not their best work to date, but is a good indication that their strength is growing again. John Bundrick's composition Common Mortal Man also shows the important contribution he makes on keyboards, as well as with his songwriting. A strong and powerful track. V. M.

RITA COOLIDGE
The Lady's Not For Sale. — (A and M AMLH 64370). Tom Shent's song Whiskey Whiskey is a good choice to show the clarity and purity of Rita's voice, specially prior to the somewhat samey choral backing. Everybody Loves A Winner, by William Bell and Booker T., is another good song, well-constructed and with a sort of philosophic shoulder-shrugging feel to it. Add in some outstanding back-up musicians and singers and you have a fair enough album . . . but some of the songs just don't have that lasting quality about them. Dylan's I'll Be Your Baby Tonight is an unqualified success.
PAUL WILLIAMS
Life Goes On. — (A and M AMLS 64367). Some of us have waited a long while for this one. Paul, a bespectacled gnome-like figure, has a style all his own. He writes evocative, simple, humane songs — and his voice is capable of gentleness but also moments of determined fire. Still ludicrously underrated, but coming along nicely . . . that's a career summing-up. This album must do him a lot of good. His songs are of sentimentality — as Rose — and they are of a sort of questing, questioning loneliness — as on Where Do I Go From Here. He finds his solace Out In The Country, and sings this track to a big-building, shuffling, cymbalic backing. He writes well, sings pretty well, has a good back-up pianist in Craig Doerge.
BILLY PAUL
360 degrees. — (Epic 65351). This includes the now highly-noted Me and Mrs. Jones but there is a lot more, brass-backed high-octane solid soul. Billy Paul has been highly rated in the specialist field for a while now, and the raves have not been in vain. Am I Black Enough has him at a chattering, top-speed mood of urgency, but he shows his versatility by instantly switching to a slow burner, Let's Stay Together, in any case a first-rate song. The bespectacled, bearded all-rounder is up there in the star bracket — a very talented soul-seller.

Breaking all the rules

Painted Head (CBS 65209). I love every sprawling word that Tim Hardin utters, because he is one artist who doesn't have to strive to get a feeling into his voice. His Bird On A Wire album is deeply introverted — and depressively real — this set is generally Hardin in a brighter mood . . . though his voice always captures a whelm of experience. Hardin can break all the rules in phrasing, even drop words here and there, but he's a master. Try contrasting the raving opener, You Can't Judge A Book By The Cover, with Sweet Lady, which is heavily laced with strings. And then there's Do The Do, with the Cissy Houston Singers, and Tim along with Don Brooks harmonica, really creating a spontaneous feeling. Don't expect perfection from Hardin — I love him best in fact on his live album 3, which really shows his true worth. VM.

CASS ELLIOT
The Road Is No Place For A Lady. (RCA Victor SF 8306). So, sure enough, there's a picture of Mama Cass relaxing in an armchair right in the middle of a railroad track. For a girl who keeps telling the world that she's not all that keen on singing, she sure whips up an aura of enthusiasm and energy. On some tracks her voice is hidden away a bit by an overfull backing team . . . British, by the way, for this was recorded in London. On other tracks, say on Saturday Suit, she gets into a merely routine ballad-selling kick . . . but on the rest that vibrant, big, king-sized personality comes hustling through. Mama Cass is a real character, that's for sure. This is a good album without ever becoming a great one; a few less predictable items would have lifted it that bit higher. PJ.

MOSE ALLISON
Mose In Your Ear. — (Atlantic K 40460). Actually this was recorded live in a place called In Your Ear, with Mose using voice and keyboard technique against just bassist Clyde Flowers and drummer Eddie Charlton. He includes a bluesy Seventh Son, Ellington's I Ain't Got Nothin' But The Blues, and several of his own . . . notably the explosive Powerhouse. What emerges most strongly is his split-second, spot-on vocal timing. Nobody sells an off-beat phrase quite like Mose Allison.
HAROLD MELVIN AND THE BLUE NOTES
Harold Melvin. — (CBS 65350). Another vocal team, highly-touted, but not exactly fast on the chart breakthrough round the world. The break came through If You Don't Know Me By Now, and I Miss You was another biggie . . . both are on this set, and it's to the album's credit that they don't notably stand out. There's a strong air of consistency about it all, with Melvin's own somewhat brusque, occasionally over-simpering voice doing some splendid soul acrobatics. The backing sounds are competent rather than exciting . . . the spotlight is firmly on Melvin himself.
VARIOUS ARTISTS
Newport In New York '72 (Atlantic 40445, 40446, 40447, 40448, 40449). Five albums, best kept together but sold separately, commemorating an all-out jazz scene at the Radio City Music-Hall in July last year. Ira Gitler's sleeve notes conjure up the scene very well indeed, and there are pen-portraits of the galaxy of jazzmen involved on the various sessions.
Just a few tastes: volume one: Cat Anderson, Milt Buckner, Mingus and Buddy Tate; volume two: Illinois Jacquet, Elvin Jones, Gerry Mulligan and Nat Adderley . . .
Volume three: Dizzy Gillespie, Milt Jackson, Mary Lou Williams and Stan Getz; volume four; Art Blakey, Roland Kirk, Clark Terry and Sonny Stitt; volume five: Jimmy Smith, Kenny Burrell, B.B. King and Clark Terry.
HERBIE MANN
The Evolution Of Mann. — (ATL 60020). Brooklyn-born Herbie on a two-album set which outlines the way his career has gone. He was a forerunner in the efforts to get the flute accepted as a jazz instrument . . . "If a man can play jazz, he can play jazz on a flute," says Herbie. Recordings taken at various times through the 1960's, and some magnificent back-up musicians on show.
BARBRA STREISAND
Live At The Forum. — (CBS 66210). There's been a lot of chat about Bette Midler being "the new" Streisand. Which is fair enough, in terms of style and attack . . . except obviously the "old" Barbra is in no dire need of a replacement. This was a pro-McGovern political rally concert . . . 18,000 fans who cheered every note and every gesture from the lady. There's Do Don't Rain On My Parade, a touch of People, a not-so-good monologue and a magnificent On A Clear Day.
LYNN ANDERSON
Listen To A Country Song. — (CBS 65164). Title song by the Loggins-Messina team, and Tim Hardin's Reason To Believe is another track which comes off extremely well. Lynn, surely the most all-round popular of the country girls, is variously accompanied by the Nashville Edition and the Jordanaires. A nice, peaceful, undemanding set.
JIMMY DEAN
These Hands — (RCA Victor LSA 3120). Way back, way way back, Jimmy had a giant single hit with Big Bad John. He's continued along his country ways ever since, working around with a tightly laid down backing group, and still working up stacks of sentimentality . . . but laced with some real old good-time humour.
JAMES LAST
Non-stop Dancing 14. — (Polydor 2371 319). The amazingly popular sounds of the Last orchestra and singers, and as ever a long list of popular themes to contribute for a party atmosphere. In fact, there are nearly thirty titles herein, leading easily one to the other, and there's a kind of disciplined exuberance about the arrangements that come over crisply clear. That this is the fourteenth in the series suggests sales haven't been exactly slow.
HENRY MANCINI
The Mancini Generation. — (RCA Victor SF 8307). Material culled from twenty years hectic endeavour in the music scene . . . Mancini just has to be one of the most creative orchestra leader-composers in the business. Benny Golson's Killer Joe is here, Amazing Grace too — and the old Swingin' Shepherd Blues. Plenty of room left for solo work in these Mancini original arrangements . . . notably by altoist Ted Nash and, on Eager Beaver, the vibes artistry of Victor Feldman. Yet another Mancini special . . . and there have been many, all consistently strong.
STANLEY KING
All You Need To Do Is Play The Hammond. — (Ad-Rhythm ADOR 3). Seems to be a lot of album work on the Hammond organ these days.

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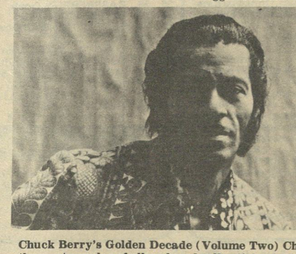
Elton John provides something for us all

Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player (DJM DJLPH 427). To my mind Daniel is one of the nicest songs to come from Elton John — and Crocodile Rock on every level — production, presentation, concept, the lot — was an excellent single. As both are included in this album package it indicates the quality to expect. The sleeve packaging is beautifully done, with tinted pictures, lyrics reproduced (and when Bernie Taupin pens them they're worth reading) and Elton's own version of a teen mag front cover reproduced inside. That's to accompany the song I'm Going To Be A Teenage Idol, which is dedicated to Marc Bolan and has that Kaylan and Volman feel about the backing vocals coupled with some lovely brass work, and Elton's honky piano style at its best. A really nice one. And for a real contrast there's the urgent power of Have Mercy On The Criminal, given a blues feel. In fact there's that rocky feel of Honky Cat captured once again with Elderberry Wine, some real old style rock lines, blues feel; in fact something, surely, for everyone. That's without making compromises — maintaining Elton's own feel throughout . . . and it would hardly be fair not to mention the capabilities of Davey Johnstone on guitars, who really has integrated well into the tight unit of Nigel Olsson and bassist Dee Murray. Elton's convinced me of his talent with this, more so than ever before. VM.



Chuck Berry's Golden Decade (Volume Two) Chess 6641058) Chuck is currently the most popular of all rock and roll artists of what ever era you wish to think of. His magic rests in the fact that he never changes. He still drives into town the day before a gig and picks up a few guys to back him and he likes to see the colour of the money when he's asked to work. That's the life he loves — the only life he knows. This is the second volume of golden Berry sounds that should take a lot of people back a few years or more, compiled by Nigel Grainge. Most of the better Berry tracks were used on the first album, but there's still a lot of good ones left to choose from, and 24 of them are here. Carol, Little Queenie Down the Road Apiece, Come On and Sweet Little Rock And Roller are probably the best known of the songs included, but it's a fair bet that when you hear the rest a memory cell will open up and and you will recognise these old hits. Good informative sleeve note by RM's James Hamilton and a fine record to put in any collection. CW.

Electric heights of Henry's wives

RICK WAKEMAN
The Six Wives Of Henry VIII (A & M AMLH 614361). It's very hard to review an album that presents someone's concept of the six historical wives of Henry, particularly knowing that this is a project that Rick Wakeman has been nurturing for many months — and deals with a subject that he has studied. History being my weakest subject at school, I couldn't contradict his conception of the wives' characters presented through music . . . but it doesn't seem to me that Ann of Cleaves would have been at home listening to some of the racey electrical passages included in her piece. But then perhaps she was a bit of a racey character and that's what Rick is trying to convey! This all wears a bit thin though, I'm afraid, and though Rick suggested this album would present a whole new facet of him ability to the public, it is basically an extension of his keyboard work as presented in Yes — with I fear a little too much emphasis placed the electronic heights he can reach, rather than the listening pleasure to be created. Which all sounds a bit hard — in fact some of the passages are interesting, one I find particularly interesting being the representation of Katherine Howard (assuming I've worked out the right top side from my unmarked white label copy!) The basic theme to Anne Boleyn is also nicely presented, and well produced. VM.

Stanley King believes in using the full range of the instrument, and there are even sleeve-note details on which buttons, pedals and pullers he's used.
PERRY COMO
The Shadow Of Your Smile. — (RCA Victor 1411). A reissue of previous Como biggies — all for 99p. As ever, a relaxed set yet no matter how casual Como sounds there's still that unmistakable touch of class which has put him in the world's top ballad-singing league. Title song, of course, stems from The Sandpiper movie.
PORTER WAGONER
What Ain't To Be, Just Might Happen. — (RCA Victor LSA 3130). Country star of long standing, with the usual electric guitar and banjo sounds filled out with steel guitar. The songs are occasionally off-beat and narrative in form — Waldo The Weirdo, The Rubber Room, and the title track reflects the languid, sensitive Wagoner style.
MIKE MORTON SOUNDS
Non Stop Hits. — (RCA Int. 1421). Fourth in the series and including up-to-date chart reconstructions — The Jean Genie, Long Haired Lover, Ball Park Incident . . . twelve tracks and the right sort of record to keep an undemanding party going in a swing.